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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Guantanamo Suicides Middle East -
Israeli Strikes - Hamas Death of Zarkawi The U.S. and the UN
PARIS - Monday, June 12, 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Guantanamo Suicides
Middle East - Israeli Strikes - Hamas
Death of Zarkawi
The U.S. and the UN

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

Despite the French Open and World Cup results covering today's front pages, Le Figaro devotes one quarter of its front page to: "Guantanamo: Suicides Which Put Bush Under Pressure," adding: "The position of the U.S. is more and more difficult to defend after the death of three inmates." In his editorial entitled "Bush in the Guantanamo Trap" Yves Threard says the U.S. President "hardly had time to enjoy the elimination of Zargawi..." and reiterates that Guantanamo is "outside the law: even if the prisoners do not elicit much compassion considering where they come from, the conditions of their detention does not enhance the image of the U.S." Threard contends that "while the fight against terrorism must show no mercy, the end does not justify the means..." Liberation announces on its front page: "In Guantanamo, Three Suicides Which Embarrass Bush." Inside Pascal Riche quotes several NGOs including Amnesty International: "These apparent suicides are the sad results of years of arbitrary and indefinite detention." (See Part C)

TF1, FR2 and FR3 television carried reports on the suicides, showing excerpts of a phone interview with Admiral Harry Harris, Guantanamo's commanding officer: "Those three prisoners killed themselves to make people believe the Americans had murdered them." FR2's journalist was clearly negative, recalling there was a rebellion going on in Guantanamo, that 18 detainees were conducting a hunger strike and that 41 suicide attempts were counted last month. He spoke of Guantanamo and the "legal monstrosity" it represents, adding that the camp is "being criticized by some of America's 'allies'."

Israel's shelling in Gaza elicits several editorial commentaries. Le Monde writes about "unilateralisms: Olmert's and the Hamas's, neither of which would be tokens of either stability or peace." In Le Journal du Dimanche the editorial which is entitled "Abbas, Hamas and Israel" wonders: "If Israel had wanted to torpedo Abbas's attempts to resolve the crisis, it would not have acted any differently." For communist l'Humanite "Israel has Torpedoed the Palestinian Referendum." For La Croix "Abbas's Bet Is A Complicated One." In her editorial Dominique Quinio sees Abbas as "having his back against a wall" and trying "a last ditch attempt with a referendum whose results are far from certain." (See Part C)

An op-ed in Liberation rebuts a previous op-ed in favor of "not boycotting Hamas." This one, entitled "The True Nature of Hamas" comments: "The two previous commentators refute the notion that humiliation and extreme poverty can result from an aggravated situation caused by leaders and corrupt Arab nations which have refused, except for Egypt and Jordan, to recognize the existence of Israel. They repeat Castro's contention that it is the U.S. embargo which has caused Cuba's poverty..."

Le Monde devotes a full-page report to the use of images as a weapon in connection with the U.S. administration's "parading of Zargawi's body in order to demoralize the enemy while attempting to regain some credibility." In his report, Patrice Claude recalls the pictures of Saddam Hussein in detention as well as Donald Rumsfeld's comments after Iraqi television interviewed three American soldiers: "The Geneva Convention does not allow war prisoners to be paraded in this manner." To which Claude says in closing his article: "Double Standards? One thing is sure, images serve as weapons and in times of war, every weapon is used."

Saturday's Le Figaro carries an opinion column analyzing the U.S. 'hollywoodization' of the war on terror. (See Part C)

In Le Journal du Dimanche Gilles Delafon revisits last week's confrontation at the UN between Kofi Annan's deputy, Mark Malloch-Brown and John Bolton, in a column entitled "An Elephant at the UN." Very critical of Bolton, "who hates the UN and is emblematic of the impasse at the UN" Delafon also recognizes

"Secretary Rice's talent in enhancing America's diplomacy." (See Part C)

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:
Guantanamo Suicides

"Bush in the Trap of Guantanamo"

Yves Threard in right-of-center Le Figaro (06/12): "Criticized on the international scene, at the lowest in his ratings, President Bush was not even able to enjoy the elimination of Zarqawi. The three suicides in Guantanamo are going to fuel the controversy over the means used by President Bush in his war against terrorism... The conditions of detention and the existence itself of Guantanamo do not enhance the image of the U.S. even if the detainees themselves do not elicit much compassion, considering where they come from... Guantanamo is an 'anomaly' as Blair said, a zone outside the law which violates every international convention... This is a godsend for anti-Americans who speak of a 'modern-day Gulag...' The Bush administration is aware it needs to put an end to the Guantanamo experience. But whatever the outcome, it will be difficult not to add arbitrary to the arbitrary. Of the 760 detainees, 300 have been released, but we know not for what reasons. While the detainees are most probably dangerous for the U.S., ... there is no proof... as the Moussaoui trial has showed... The legality and jurisdiction of Guantanamo are in question and the imminent decision of the Supreme Court could help Bush to make a decision... With months to go before the mid-term elections, President Bush must get out of the trap of Guantanamo. He cannot speak for democracy in the world and tolerate an outlaw system. While the fight against terrorism must show no mercy, the end does not justify the means."

"The American Hell Hole"

Bernard Guetta on government-run France Inter radio (06/12): "The expression 'asymmetrical war' used by Admiral Harris cannot be used here... despite what Colleen Graffy said in a BBC interview: 'A tactical, public relations operation serving the Jihadist movement...' No one will ever know, but these three men certainly had reason to kill themselves, including their lack of official status... These 'enemy combatants,' a term invented by Washington, have not been formally indicted... Guantanamo is an illegal detention center, which violates American and international laws, a scandal which Blair calls 'an anomaly.' Europe and every organization defending human rights have called for Guantanamo to be closed down. Without even talking of alleged torture, there is an obvious reason for committing suicide when detained in Guantanamo: despair caused by the lack of recourse nor the possibility of seeing the end of the tunnel."

"The Side of Good In bad Shape"

Marc Chevanche in regional Nice Matin (06/12): "The U.S. thought the elimination of Zarkawi could serve as a victory bulletin. The three suicides in Guantanamo can only serve as a bulletin for defeat. Both incidents illustrate the extreme difficulty which the U.S. is facing in finding the proper means to fight against Islamic terrorism... The question of the values being defended and the liberties taken with those same values is once again being raised. The side of Good, both militarily and morally, is in bad shape."

Death of Zarkawi

"America, Bush and the 'Hollywoodization' of Geopolitics"

Renaud Girard in right-of-center Le Figaro (06/10): "One feels rather dizzy in witnessing the President of the United States, the most powerful nation of the world, designate a former petty criminal, re-converted to Islam, as his direct adversary... Zarkawi ... was only the leader of a group profiting from the disintegration of Iraq... There's another reason for feeling ill at ease. The 'ideology of terror' is a confusing notion ... There is no, and has never been in history, 'an ideology of terror.' There have been ideologies such as communism or nazism which used terror...The September 11 attackers were committed...in the name of a totalitarian ideology which is fast growing today: Islamicism. It's an ideology with aims not only to organize political society but also to dictate the private life of people... If Ben Laden enjoys today, in the heart of masses politically frustrated in the Arab-Muslim world, the aura of a prophet, he owes it to the giant campaign that the American government and media have involuntarily offered him... The \$25 million prize on the head of Zarkawi raised him to the level of Ben Laden... The term 'war on terrorism' is a hollow concept because terrorism... is only one of the multiple tactics of war... It is an idea copied from popular slogans of the type 'war against illiteracy.' It is dangerous to justify a war with imported semantics from the world of advertising or from Hollywood: this masks the true stakes from citizens. It is not by ignoring... the complexity of the political, social and religious stakes of the Arab-Muslim world that one can pacify it."

Middle East - Israeli Strikes - Hamas

"Unilateralisms"

Left-of-center Le Monde in its editorial (06/12): "Israel's pull out from the occupied territories carries 'collateral damages' which are hardly acceptable... This pullout, the result of a constant harassment from Palestinian militia, was instrumental in the victory of Hamas... Abbas's attempt to recover some of his lost power through a referendum is a daring initiative... A general rebellion

would reduce his hopes to ashes. Despite the West and Israel's calculations, the financial blockade imposed on the Islamists after their electoral victory has not deprived them of the Palestinians' support. They in fact have turned away from the Americans and the Europeans who are being accused of taking liberties with democratic principles when these do not fit with their aspirations. Mahboud Abbas's wager is therefore far from won. And this is a cause for concern because failure can open the way to two parallel unilateralisms in the region: Olmert's and Hamas's. These two unilateralisms would not be tokens of either stability or peace."

The U.S. and the UN

"An Elephant at the UN"

Gilles Delafon in right-of-center Le Journal du Dimanche (06/11):

"The current atmosphere at the UN is appalling... The debate over UN reform has pitted Americans and developing countries against each other... The most violent anti-American criticism came last week from an American, (sic- British) Kofi Annan's deputy, Mark Malloch-Brown... triggering a violent diatribe from the U.S. ambassador to the UN John Bolton... But he is in fact the incarnation of the impasse in which the UN finds itself today... His presence at the UN is an anomaly... His methods have ruffled feathers as high up as his boss, the very able Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice who has devoted herself, with a certain measure of success, to restoring credibility to her country's diplomacy... American diplomats can often be seen rolling their eyes at the mere mention of Bolton's name." STAPLETON